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LETTERS FROM GOVERNOR JOHN REYNOLDS.

Letters from the Former Governor to Hon. W. C. Flagg.

Some two or three years before the war Hon. W. C. Flagg was engaged in collecting data relative to the early history of Madison County. In pursuit of information he addressed certain inquiries to the former Governor, John Reynolds, and received the following letters in reply. They are furnished us by the courtesy of Hon. N. G. Flagg, son of the late State Senator Flagg.

FIRST LETTER.

BELLEVILLE, ILL., March 11th, 1861.

Gentlemen:

I have received your favor, enclosing circular, and will be glad to aid or assist you in my humble way to present the history of old Madison County. As there need be no politics in it, I hope we may agree in the work. I want you to write me if a straight forward sketch of some eight or ten pages in print of the early history would not be better for your enterprise than to give answers to your questions in circular. I would prefer to write a sketch, and then you might do what you pleased with it. I would still prefer, if it would comport with your plans, for my humble sketch to be printed as I would write it, be the same an honor or dishonor to the author.

I first saw Goshen (now Madison County) in February, 1807, and I lived there until the close of the War of 1812. I have been in it and about down to the present

Edward Coles

*your friend
John Reynolds*

Fac similes of the signatures of Governors Coles and
Reynolds.

time. I wrote two books—"My Times" and the "Pioneer History of Illinois"—that you should see, in my opinion, particularly about the french. In the Alton paper by Judge Bailhache I wrote many articles that would do you no harm to see. "My Times" you can procure about Edwardsville; Mr. Krafft had them to sell. Mr. Primm, in this city, has some copies of the "Pioneer History of Illinois" for sale at 50 cents.

Your work is commendable, and I am for it, as I said above. A large volume might be written on Madison County.

The old race horse, "Sleepy Davie," might be interwoven in the history, and thereby the old pioneers would quicken the pulse by reading it.

Please write me, and if it will suit your system I will write you a sketch of our county, old Madison, with my humble name to it, that I will vouch for being correct.

Your friend,

JOHN REYNOLDS.

Messrs. W. C. Flagg and others, Historical Society.

P. S.—If you would prefer it, I would attend at Alton and give you an old times lecture on the subject of your circular, but I think a written sketch is preferable.

SECOND LETTER.

BELLEVILLE, 20th March, 1861.

Dear Friend:

I had the pleasure to receive your interesting letter, and I feel proud that you are about to preserve from oblivion the "actings and doings" of the pioneers of old madison county, Illinois. I will take a little time and make out a straightforward sketch of the history of the said old county, and send it to you. I feel the public will not be liberal enough to reward you in cash for your labor. All I want is to see the work published, and my humble part hitched on to the tail of the coach, as made out by your friends.

I was in, and saw, Camp Russell on various occasions, and was at times a resident of it in 1813. I first saw it in the fall of 1812. It was an acre or more surrounded with a stockade, with several small block houses within. I do not recollect definitely the size or form of the camp, so called. You may find many old men in your county that may, I presume, give you full information on this subject. I do not believe any map or drawing of Camp Russell ever existed. moreover, I presume, no map of the county was made before the time you mention in your letter.

I think the original limits of madison county, when Governor Edwards & Co. formed it, were bounded on the south by the line dividing townships two and three north, and on the west by the Mississippi river. The northern limits, I think, reached to the north pole, and on the east was to the Wabash river for a limit.

John Messenger, in 1806 or 1807, surveyed madison county, or the country that made madison, into townships, and by them the county was formed, as above stated.

I will try and learn more of the French of Big Island and write you. i have not thought of these subjects for years, but will now turn to them to please my literary friends of madison county. I send you a pamphlet, which I hope you will read and write me what you think of it. It may give you some ideas of my opinions of the unfortunate negro races. Did you ever read Glidden on the negro subject in Egypt?

Please write me if you are a son of Gershom Flagg, that lived and died six or seven miles north of Edwardsville. If you are the son, you had a good, conscientious father. Your father is now in Abraham's bosom—not Abe Lincoln—if such spirit land exists.

Your friend,

W. C. Flagg, Esq.

JOHN REYNOLDS.